

Gang Awareness

What is a Gang?

A street gang is a group of people who form an allegiance for a common purpose and who engage, either individually or collectively, in violent, unlawful, or criminal activity. Gangs are predominately territory oriented. Each gang has its own "turf" and graffiti marks its boundaries. Anyone not belonging in the area and resembling a rival gang affiliate may become the subject of attack.

Gang Names, Nicknames and Tags

Many gangs adopt names that have significance to their neighborhood or geographic area. Many gang affiliates adopt nicknames or "tags" when recruited into the group. The gang selects a name or tag that fits the individual's personality or appearance.

Why Do Young People Join?

Some reasons include a sense of belonging, security, identity, love, the excitement of gang activity, peer pressure, attention, financial benefit, family tradition, and a lack of realization of the hazards involved. In many cases, young people are not actively discouraged from gang involvement by their parents. Often, parents don't realize that their children are engaged in gang activity.

What Do Gangs Do?

Gang members seek confrontations with rival gang members. The resulting violence often claims innocent victims. Gangs create damage on a regular basis to local property and businesses. Vandalism, a form of graffiti, and destruction of public and private property, is often done to further the gang's reputation.

Large walled areas and abandoned houses are a favorite target for vandalism, but even occupied homes do not escape destruction. The majority of residents in a gang area who are unable to move away live in fear.

Identifying Gang Members

Most gang members are proud of their gang and freely admit their membership. Many display tattoos and dress in a style identifying their particular gang. Their personal belongings are frequently covered with graffiti and bear the gang's logo and the affiliate's gang name. Many gang members make gestures with their hands and fingers which identify their gang.

Graffiti - Turf Markings

Graffiti is a problem that impacts our neighborhoods in a variety of ways. It decreases property values in residential neighborhoods and negatively affects industrial and commercial areas. Of great concern is the inherent violence associated with gang graffiti.

Gangs use graffiti to mark their "turf" or territory. They also use it to advertise the gang's status or power and to declare allegiance.

When a neighborhood is marked with graffiti, indicating territorial dominance, the entire area and its inhabitants become targets for violence. Anyone on the street or in a home is fair game for drive-by attacks by rival gangs. A rival gang identifies everyone in the neighborhood as a potential threat. Consequently, innocent residents are often subjected to gang violence by the mere presence of graffiti in their neighborhood.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

PARENTS

- * Know your youngster's friends and become involved in his or her activities.
- * Know where your youngster spends his or her time after school, during evenings, and on weekends. Check with parents of their friends about their activities.
- * Become involved at school; talk with teachers and counselors.
- * Become familiar with current gang symbols in the area.
- * Increase your communication with your youngster, and watch for the "gang affiliation indicators."
- * Build self-esteem in your youngster. Provide opportunities for involvement and reinforcement.
- * Be a positive role model.
- * Spend Time With Your Kids!!!

TEACHERS

- * Watch for the "gang affiliation indicators."
- * Notify school authorities of at-risk children.
- * Contact police when graffiti is discovered. Police will make a report and take photographs. Then remove graffiti immediately.
- * Keep informed about gang behavior in the community and support the holding of gang seminars by the District.
- * Communicate with police officers who regularly patrol the area of your school and exchange information with them.
- * Provide information to school officials on gang members' activities.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- * Become informed on the facts about gang activities in Corvallis.
- * Report evidence of gang activity to police immediately. Your name will not be made public if you request anonymity.
- * Support police efforts to reduce gang activity.
- * Clean all graffiti immediately, within 48 hours.

SIGNS OF POSSIBLE GANG AFFILIATION

1. Change of friends.
2. Refers to friends by unusual nicknames; gang members adopt "street names."
3. Exhibits negative changes in school or work habits.
4. Refuses to follow family or "house rules," such as chore assignments and curfew times.
5. Seems preoccupied with group of peers or talks about illegal activities.
6. Draws graffiti on books, notebooks, clothing or on body.
7. Uses hand "signs."
8. Seems to have unaccounted for money, new clothing or other items, but has no legitimate source of income.
9. Change in appearance: tattoos, hair style, walk or talk.
10. Increase in discipline problems, school absenteeism or police contact.
11. Exhibits increasing anti-social feelings: hostility, anger or contempt, especially against a particular group or segment of the community.
12. Exhibits signs of substance abuse: alcohol, drugs, etc.

One or more of these signs may indicate gang activity or could indicate a warning sign of other problems. Check with your youngster's school teachers and ask to review school work and attendance.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Following is a list of resources available to citizens, parents and school staff for assistance and information about gangs in our community:

POLICE

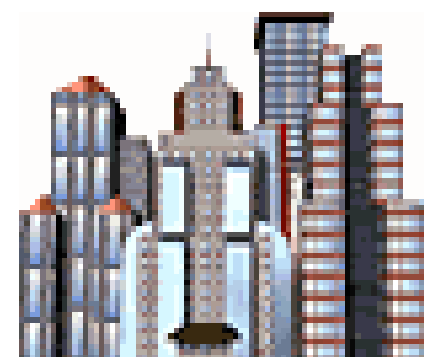
Emergencies	9-1-1
School Resource Officer	766-6924
VALIANT (Drug Unit)	928-0913

RELATED RESOURCE AGENCIES

Benton County Health Dept.	766-6835
Benton County Mental Health	766-6844
or after hours/weekends	766-2299
Center Against Rape & Domestic Violence, CARDV	754-0110
Services for Children and Families	757-4121
Community Mediation Services	758-3000
Community Outreach	758-3000

Brochure Presented by:

Corvallis Police Department
180 NW 5th St
Corvallis, OR 97339
(541)766-6924



What You Need To Know About Gangs In Our Community

Definition of a Criminal Street Gang:

"A gang is a group of people who interact among themselves; take upon themselves an identity and/or a group name; sometimes claim a physical territory; and engage together in one or more forms of anti-social and/or criminal activity on a regular or ongoing basis."